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# THE CRY FOR ANOTHER VOTE



Reasons Why There Can Not  
and Ought Not to be Another  
Vote on Church Union



Issued by  
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## WHY ANOTHER VOTE SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN

(1)—Another vote of the people is not necessary.

(2)—It would be impossible in three thousand congregations.

(3)—It would be unconstitutional.

(4)—It would be a breach of faith (a) with union charges, (b) with the other negotiating Churches, (c) with the lower courts of the Presbyterian Church, (b) with the people who voted for union.

(5)—It would exaggerate and intensify strife and division within congregations, and bring chaos in many.

(6)—It would be a reversion of democracy under which majorities rule.

(7)—It would mean the destruction of the representative character of the Presbyterian Church.

(8)—It would be utterly useless, for it would in no wise settle the question. The active opponents of Union do not recognize any vote for Union as valid.

## THE CRY FOR ANOTHER VOTE

**T**HE cry for another vote of the people is a plausible one, and, to many, it appears to be a reasonable request. "Why not trust the people?" they say, as though the people had not been trusted, and as though another vote would settle everything and fully and finally satisfy the opponents of Church Union.

Let us look calmly into this request and see whether it is a reasonable one.

### Who Wants Another Vote?

In the first place, from whom does this request come? It comes, unofficially, from members of the Presbyterian Church Association, a private organization which has set before itself the task of preventing, by any and every means, the consummation of a union upon which the Presbyterian Church has, by constitutional procedure, finally decided. The cardinal principle of this Association is that the union is illegal, and to carry it into effect would be a "violation of trusts." The leaders of this Association have recorded their protest against every step that has been taken by the Church Courts, on the ground that these proceedings were "ultra vires." When the question was sent down to the Presbyteries and to the people, on two occasions, under the Barrier Act, these anti-unionists renounced all responsibility for such

procedure. They have all along refused to trust either the Church Courts or the people on this question.

### **Another Vote "Illegal"!**

Within the past few months members of this Association have pronounced excommunication upon all Presbyterians who have voted for Union. They have declared that all such have "forfeited their membership and rights in the Presbyterian Church in Canada." The President of this Association has officially and categorically denied that they either want a vote of the people, or that they would be in any way bound by it if it were taken. Here is his statement:—

"Mention was made in some press reports of another referendum, but we have not asked for such a referendum. The report which stated that if there was a majority in such a referendum, we would cease our opposition, is wholly mistaken and untrue."

### **Appeal to Caesar—Not to the People**

Furthermore, members of this Anti-Union Association have recently issued a writ against the appointed representatives of the Presbyterian Church for an injunction to restrain them from carrying out the instructions of the General Assembly. The statement of claim accompanying this writ declares that it is illegal for the Presbyterian Church even to

"Negotiate" with any other body, "not Presbyterian," with a view to Union.

In view of these attempts on the part of the Presbyterian Church Association to prove that the Union is legally impossible, what are we to think of this plea for another vote of the people? If the Union is illegal, then every vote that has been taken, whether of the people or of the Courts of the Church, is null and void; and by asking for another vote the Anti-Unionists are urging the Church to commit what they must logically regard as *another illegal act*. IN ONE BREATH THEY SAY "TRUST THE PEOPLE," AND IN THE NEXT THEY APPEAL TO CAESAR TO DISENFRANCHISE BOTH COURTS AND PEOPLE.

### Another Vote on What?

This cry for another vote pre-supposes that the question of Union is not yet settled, and that nothing has been done to put Union into effect. The actual fact is that, not only has the Presbyterian Church come to a definite and constitutional decision to unite with the Methodist and Congregational Churches, but it has, on the strength of that decision, proceeded to give effect to the Union.

There are to-day, right across the Dominion, more than twelve hundred and forty-five pastoral charges already in various forms of Union, including no less than three thousand congregations. Close and intensive co-operation has been carried into effect in every department of the Churches' work, which would have been impossible had not ultimate Union

been in prospect. What, then, is there to vote upon? Are the people to be asked whether these Union congregations, which the Churches have authorized and organized, shall be abandoned or disbanded? Are the Presbyterians in these Union congregations to be asked to vote on the question whether their parent Church should keep faith with them?

There is no general agreement among those who are advocating another vote as to what the subject of such a plebiscite should be. Occasionally, Anti-Unionist speakers declare they are "not opposed to Union, but merely to **this Union.**" Vague references are made to a possible federation. There is a suggestion that the proposed legislation be submitted to the vote of the people.

## **Principle of Legislation Approved by People**

The suggestion that the Bill be sent to the people for approval cannot be taken seriously. No piece of legislation that ever came before Parliament was ever seen by the average elector who voted for its central principle. The principles of the proposed Union legislation are set forth in the Basis of Union, which was printed and sent down to the people for perusal and adoption or rejection. The last vote of the people was on this Basis of Union, and the people adopted it by a decisive majority of over 50,000. When the people approved of the Basis of Union, they, in advance,

approved of the proposed legislation, for the Bill is merely the legal instrument prepared by competent lawyers to give effect to the legal principle involved in the Basis of Union.

As for the suggestion that a proposal for Federation be submitted to the people, where is there such a proposal that has any vestige of practicability, or that would be acceptable to the other churches in lieu of the organic union that has been mutually agreed upon and to a large extent carried into effect? There is no such proposal, and it is too late in the day to concoct one.

### **Delay to Strangle Union**

All Anti-Unionists are agreed upon one point—that the Union must be delayed in the hope that it may be strangled at its birth. In reality, this demand for another vote is a deliberate attempt on the part of an organized section of the minority to override constitutional procedure and defeat the aims of representative Church Government. That this is their avowed intention is shown by official statements of the Presbyterian Church Association. They have stated again and again that the General Assembly is not a representative body, and they have defied and defamed Presbyteries, and ignored the Sessions of Churches.

### **Abandon Thirty Years of Progress**

The Presbyterian Church acts constitutionally through the Presbyteries and the General Assembly, under the Barrier Act. These

Courts, as representatives of the people, have decided to consummate Union. Shall they now go to the people and ask whether they represent them or not? Such action would be an admission that they do not enjoy the confidence of the people who have called them and elected them as representatives in these Courts.

If the Church Courts had acted hastily in this matter of Union there might be some reason in the plea for a vote at this time, but the movement toward Union has been slow and deliberate. It extends back over thirty years, and has been a practical issue for upwards of twenty years. The Church Courts have discussed every aspect of the question; they have conferred over it; they have prayed over it, and, finally, they took solemn action. In all this leading towards Union those strong and saintly men who are gone, and these earnest leaders of the Church to-day, believed that they represented and had the confidence of the people who appointed them. The fact must be frankly faced that, under cover of a cry for "another vote," a systematic attempt is being made to render null and void all that has been done on the strength and authority of the votes that have already been taken in the Church Courts and in the congregations.

### **Do the People Want Another Vote?**

Is it not reasonable to suppose that if there was a widespread demand in the congregations for another popular vote on the question of Union that this demand would have made

itself vocal in the Presbyteries of the Church? Every congregation is represented in the Presbytery by its minister and an elder. What has been the expressed desire of the Presbyteries, through which the people speak? Have they asked for another vote? On the contrary, they have urged the Assembly to immediate and conclusive action on Church Union. Only last spring, out of fifty-six Presbyteries considering the question, fifty-two overtured the General Assembly at Port Arthur to proceed forthwith to the consummation of Union, under the terms of the proposed legislation.

### A "Straw" Harvest

A determined attempt has been recently made by the Presbyterian Church Association to stir up the people against Union. Officials and members of this Association have invaded congregations and urged the people to revolt against constituted authority and to take the Government into their own hands. They have agitated and disrupted peaceful congregations, encouraged defiance of majorities, and have set up a standard of minority-terrorism and intimidation that would throw the entire machinery of Church government into chaos. The harvest of this sowing of the seeds of sedition consists of a sheaf of "straw" votes, some bundles of promiscuously-signed cards of protest, and a circulated petition. By means of these "straw" votes, the Anti-Unionists hope to convince the Parliaments of Canada that the majority of the people in sixty churches do not want Union. But this

is not the case, as in no instance where a vote by ballot was taken has half of the membership voted against Union. Even if they did, what are sixty congregations, or twice that number, out of a total of over four thousand?

### **Involves Breach of Faith**

Nothing can be more certain and clear than that the Presbyterian Church, in 1916, did decide to consummate Union, and that she did inform the Methodist and Congregational Churches of that decision. The Presbyterian Church has never gone back upon that decision, but has re-affirmed it at two subsequent Assemblies—in 1921 and 1923.

Since that decision in 1916, the entire business of the three Churches has been conducted with a view to Union. The organization and machinery of these three Churches, have, in many sections of the country, undergone change and reconstruction. Three thousand congregations have taken these Churches at their word and entered into some form of union on the explicit terms "until the organic union of the three negotiating Churches is consummated." It would be nothing short of criminal to attempt a vote which would unquestionably divide these local union congregations. To go to the people now for another vote would be to ask whether the Presbyterian Church is to be untrue to covenants solemnly made with her own people and with two sister Churches. How seriously these sister Churches took the decision of the Presbyterian General

Assembly may be judged from a statement by the General Superintendent to the Methodist Church, in which he says:—

“The Methodist Church was bound to receive the official assurances of the General Assembly as to the decisions and purposes of the Church and the people whose supreme Court it is, and it did so accept them without question or hesitation.”

“While we never have desired, and do not now desire, Union as the fulfilment of a contract, and do not stand in need of it for any denominational reason, yet, having always felt that the men and women who made these affirmations were our brethren and sister in Christ Jesus whose ‘Yea’ we did not doubt was a solid ‘Yea,’ and whose ‘Amen’ was to us sacred and secure.”

To every word of this, Dr. W. T. Gunn representing the Congregational Churches utters a fervent “Amen.” Could Christian courtesy go further? If the General Assembly is not in honor bound to Union, nothing can bind her.

## Two Popular Votes Already

The question of Union has been submitted twice to the people. On the first occasion (1911) the vote was on the question: “Are you in favor of organic union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches?” In that vote less than 17 per cent. of the membership

cast their ballots against union. On the second occasion (1915) the vote was taken on the question: "Are you in favor of union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches on the Basis of Union?" In this vote only 22 per cent. of the membership voted against it, although every voter was reminded that this was a *final* vote, and "the decision must be reached on the basis of the vote cast." Of those voting over 60 per cent. voted for union. The vote of the adherents was 65 per cent. in favor of union. Of the entire eldership of the Church, 96 per cent. voted on the question, and, of those voting, over 64 per cent. were in favor of union. Of the Presbyteries, which took the matter up after this popular expression of opinion, fifty-three voted in favor of the consummation of union.

### Four to One For Union

The majorities in the Assemblies have been always more than three to one, and frequently more than four to one in favor of union. At the 1923 Assembly, in Port Arthur, in spite of prodigious attempts to divide the ranks of the Unionists by a plausible scheme of federation, the proposed legislation was carried by a total of 427 to 129. At this Assembly 229 ministers voted in favor of the motion, 70 ministers against; 198 elders voted for the motion, and only 59 against. In the amendment to Clause 4 of the Union Committee's report at the Assembly of 1923, a request was made for another vote without reference

to the Barrier Act. This amendment was lost without even a division of the House.

## Parliamentary Interference

It has been suggested that Parliament should order that the matter be again submitted to the people. Let the Moderator of the General Assembly answer this request. In a recent statement on the question of another vote, Dr. Gandier says:—

“Do they know what they are suggesting? Nothing less than that Parliament should dictate the policy and procedure of a particular Church. The duty of Parliament is to see that the Churches applying for legislation have acted in accordance with their own constitution and that the rights of all parties have been conserved; but to go beyond that and attempt to dictate the policy and procedure of any Church would raise a far bigger question than that of the present Church Union, and one in which all the Churches are equally concerned—namely, the whole question of spiritual freedom and of state control in religion. If Parliament can decide the policy and procedure of the Presbyterian Church and demand that it be other than Presbyterian, then Parliament can do the same with the Anglican, and Baptist, and Methodist, and Roman Catholic, and all other Churches in Canada. That would be Erastianism unheard of in

modern times, and the spiritual freedom for which the Scottish Churches have contended since the Reformation, and which they have now fully attained, would be at an end in Canada. No one imagines that any legislature would assume such responsibility if it could."

### **Church Union Helps National Unity**

So far as Canada is concerned, unity of organization is essential to the national life. The immense distances, sparse population, and vast, void spaces, all tend to separate the people, and any movement that fosters the spirit of national unity and will promote and intensify the national consciousness is of the highest value, and should receive universal support. There are class and sectional unions that tend to national unrest and disintegration, BUT THE UNION OF THE CHURCHES IS IN THE HIGHEST AND LARGEST SENSE CONSTRUCTIVE AND BENEFICENT.

This Union should commend itself, not only to the leaders of the religious life of Canada, but also to statesmen, whose supreme desire and ambition is to make Canada a united nation.







